



PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration designates four more early college programs to give students a head start

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Executive Office of Education

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BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today gave official designation to four additional early college programs that will help high school students prepare for college academics, while earning college credits at no cost to them. The four new programs – at public high schools in Lawrence, Holyoke, Westfield, Springfield, and Worcester – will bring the statewide total to nine and enroll thousands of students this fall to study in a particular field that interests them.

Early college programs combine traditional high school classes with college courses through a local public college or university to give students knowledge and exposure to an area of study, while earning up to 12 college credits – equivalent to one semester – for free. Early college boosts college completion rates for low-income students, minority students, and first-generation college-goers by exposing students to college-level work and different career pathways before they graduate high school. The college courses are designed to fulfill high school graduation requirements and award college credit.

By creating designated early college programs, the Baker-Polito Administration aims to break down barriers between high school and higher education in order to create a more seamless path for students to move to college and careers. In May, the Administration granted official designation status, for the first time, to five programs.

“Boosting the number of early college programs in the Commonwealth is a priority for our administration that will provide more students with an opportunity to attend and complete college,” **Governor Charlie Baker said.** “Exposing high school students to college courses in a field that interests them, and offering college credits at no cost, will make the transition to college easier and better prepare many students for successful careers following their education.”

“We thank the faculty and staff at the high schools and colleges developing and implementing these early college programs for their hard work to open doors for many students who might not think college is feasible,” **Lt. Governor Karyn Polito said.**

In March 2017, Governor Charlie Baker announced the Baker-Polito Administration would make efforts to significantly increase the number of early college seats available to high school students. During the 2018–2019 school year, nearly 1,500 students will be enrolled in designated early college programs around the state. By 2019–2020, enrollments in designated early college programs are projected to jump to 2,280.

“Designated early college programs not only put students on a path towards college success,” Education Secretary James Peyser said. “They also offer them an opportunity for workplace learning experiences that will help them connect their school work to their career interests.”

“What’s so important about Early College is that it gives students a sense of the rigors of college coursework,” **said Massachusetts Higher Education Commissioner Carlos E. Santiago.** “We know that

students who have early college opportunities are much more likely to do well when they arrive on campus, because they know what to expect.”

“Designated early college programs will help connect students’ coursework with their future and show them that they are capable of college work,” **Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley said.** “I am glad to see more districts and colleges teaming up to offer these opportunities.”

The following organizations received early college designation, and some programs are eligible for \$140,000 in implementation grant funding:

Lawrence Public Schools and Merrimack College: Lawrence High School and Merrimack College partnered to create four career pathways for students: Elementary STEM education, political science, biochemistry/pre-medical, and human development. Students may also take classes in other fields that interest them, including criminal justice/criminology, and theatre arts. Students will participate in internship programs. Lawrence Public Schools also forged a relationship with the Lawrence Partnership, a public-private collaborative that works to create economic opportunities for residents by bringing together business, education, nonprofit and government leaders.

Lawrence Public Schools and Northern Essex Community College: Lawrence High School 11th and 12th grade early college students will have the opportunity to take courses at Northern Essex Community College to study either engineering, public administration, healthcare or business. Lawrence Public Schools partnered with OneGoal to provide support to students who may not be college-bound, as well as train teachers to work with groups of students to increase college options by assisting with college application and enrollment processes.

Holyoke Public Schools, Springfield Public Schools, Westfield Public Schools and Westfield State University: Known as the “Westfield Promise” this early college program expressly works to enroll students who might not consider themselves college-bound. The program is a liberal arts pathway that begins in 9th grade for students at Holyoke High School, Westfield High School, Westfield Technical Academy, The High School of Commerce and Putnam Vocational Technical Academy, both in Springfield.

Worcester Public Schools and Worcester State University and Quinsigamond Community College: This early college program brings together the local community college and the state university to provide a district-wide model in all seven high schools in Worcester. Students will be exposed to preparatory work in 9th and 10th grade, and then in 11th and 12th grade they will take courses at either Worcester State or Quinsigamond Community College to earn 12 college credits. This program will offer three pathways in either engineering/biotechnology, computer science, or early childhood education.

In 2016, the Boards of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education looked at whether the state could devise an early college strategy. They commissioned a study, done by Parthenon-EY

Education Practice, to look at what already existed in Massachusetts and the possibility of expanding successful models. The report found early college is a promising model that narrows educational opportunity gaps, and existing programs were a powerful base from which to build a broader statewide early college initiative.

Last year, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education agreed on criteria to enable programs to become designated early college programs. Through the designation process, the Departments of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education asked K-12 schools, community colleges and state universities to jointly design models.

There are five design principles for a designated early college program:

- Equitable access for all students
- Guided academic pathways
- Enhanced student supports
- Relevant connection to career
- Deep partnerships between high schools, community colleges and state universities

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